

The Maine Farmer: An Agricultural and Family Newspaper.

Maine Farmer

Augusta, May 3, 1873.

TERMS OF THE MAINE FARMER.
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direction of his paper must communicate to us the
name of the office to which it has been previously sent,
otherwise we shall be unable to comply with his re-
quest.

Advertisers' Notices.

Mr. V. D. Dillingham will visit Penobscot County in
March and April.

Mr. C. S. Atwater is now canvassing the county of
Waldo.

Mr. S. N. Talmis is now canvassing the county of
Kennebec.

Mr. J. S. Small will call upon subscribers in York
County during the present month.

About Birds.

Several species of our earlier spring birds have
already made their appearance among us, and in the early morning the leafless trees on
the borders of our woodlands and along the
highways, are made vocal with the melody of
their sweet songs. Any person who has an
appreciative ear for dulce notes, if he will
sacrifice his morning nap, and take a walk
through the groves half an hour after the
dawn, on any pleasant morning, will be richly
rewarded.

While most of our readers doubtless recog-
nize the more common birds which visit us at
this season of the year, and are able to apply
the common name, there are but few who have
so far studied their habits as to know their
haunts, their nesting places or to be able to
recognize them by their songs. And yet the
study of the habits of these beautiful creatures,
which pay their annual visit to this northern clime, is one of the most pleasurable
pastimes imaginable; and a pastime which is
open to rich and poor alike, for it costs nothing,
save a little time which every one has at
his command. To the agriculturalist there is a
positive benefit to be derived from the pursuit
of this study, for it will thereby learn to
distinguish friend from foe among the feathered
tribes. All the small birds that arrive at this
season, however, are the farmer's friends, and
have already commenced their irrepressible
warfare upon insects that are injurious to veg-
etation. The ignorance which prevailed
in years past in reference to this master, re-
sulting in an annual slaughter of the innocents,
is a pastime which is to be em-
ployed to the agriculturalist, when they really
were his friends, is very much to be deplored.

Among the birds which follow closely in the
footsteps of retiring winter, is that familiar
member of the thrush family, called the robin
(*Turdus migratorius*), though he is very un-
like his English namesake. In mild winters
they often remain in some parts of New Eng-
land the entire year, but the advance guard
usually makes its appearance in Maine about
the middle of March, and the whole army of
them are here before the close of the month.
Farmers, and especially horticulturalists have
always been very strongly prejudiced against
this bird, on account of his propensity to rob
the trees of cherries and other small fruit.
But the robin is not naturally a fruit-eater, and
its young are never fed with anything but ani-
mal food. The vast quantities of caterpillars,
crickets, grasshoppers, the grubs of locusts,
harvest flies, beetles and other worms destruc-
ted by these birds, furnish food for their
young, more than a hundred fold repays the loss
of a few cherries. The cut-worms which com-
mit such havoc upon our potato vines, beets,
beans and other culinary plants, in the night
time, are destroyed in large numbers by robins
which take them early in the morning be-
fore they have retired to their holes in the
ground.

The robin is also one of our finest looking
birds, as well as one of our best songsters.
His plumage is not like that of some others,
but his sleek russet coat, his crimson
breast and noble eye, give him a more com-
manding presence than any other member of
the numerous thrush family. And then his song!
How at early morning and late at even-
ing, perched upon the topmost branches of an
apple tree, he chants his sweet roundelay.

The blubird (*Motacilla Sialis*) is another
of our early spring birds, is another of
our most beautiful songsters, usually arrives
the first week in March, but this year it de-
layed its coming until near the close of the
month. When it first comes it may be found
in low thickets and scrubby woods, and usu-
ally in considerable numbers together. About
this time in this latitude it makes, and
commences building its mate, and
the female soon attracts them in large numbers
by hanging up gourd shells in which they make
their nests.

This bird is also a friend of the farmer and
gardener, his food consisting of flies, bugs,
worms and grasshoppers. Like the swallow
it often sitscapes its prey when on the wing.

The song sparrow (*Fringilla melodia*), one
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